



Weary postal workers hope Biden will bring new tone, change

By DAVID SHARP
Associated Press
PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — The U.S. Postal Service's stretch of challenges didn't end with the November general election and tens of millions of mail-in votes. The pandemic-depleted workforce fell further into a hole during the holiday rush, leading to long hours and a mountain of delayed mail.



PRIORITY MAIL

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Postal carrier Josiah Morse makes his rounds, Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021, in Portland, Maine.

Associated Press



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Weary postal workers hope Biden will bring new tone, change



Postal carrier Josiah Morse steps carefully on a snowy sidewalk, Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021, in Portland, Maine.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

Postmaster General Louis DeJoy has vowed to make improvements after facing withering criticism and calls for his removal for his

actions that slowed delivery of mail before the election. Some critics hoped President Joe Biden would fire DeJoy, but a president can't do that. Instead, Biden could and likely will

use appointments to reshape the Board of Governors, which meets Tuesday for the first time since his election.

It's unclear how swiftly Biden's administration will move. A White House spokesperson declined to comment on upcoming appointments.

Mark Dimondstein, president of the American Postal Workers Union, said he's hoping for some "bold appointments" by Biden.

"We want a Board of Governors that understands fundamentally this is not called the United States Postal Business," he said. "It's not a profit-making business. It's here to serve the people."

A change in tone, at the least, would be welcomed

by postal workers after former President Donald Trump called the Postal Service "a joke" last year in criticizing business practices that led to a growing operating deficit.

Despite the pandemic, on-time rates for first-class mail topped 90% for most of the year until DeJoy took office in June and began instituting changes that raised concerns about the delivery of mail-in election ballots. Workers decried DeJoy for limiting overtime and late or extra trips, resulting in delayed mail, and the dismantling of sorting machines ahead of the election.

All told, the Postal Service successfully delivered more than 130 million ballots to and from voters during the general election.

But by the time Christmas arrived, it had gotten so bad that more than a third of first-class mail was late, a dismal performance, even though DeJoy had backtracked on some of his changes by then.

At the holiday peak, tractor-trailers chock full of mail were left idling outside some postal-sorting facilities across the country because there was no room inside. Packages and letters piled up in distribution hubs. Delays grew by days, and then weeks.

A number of factors contributed to the nightmare. Americans were using the Postal Service at unprecedented level because of the pandemic. Overtime couldn't make up for the impact of postal workers' COVID-19 illnesses and quarantines. Commercial flights that transport mail operated on reduced schedules. And FedEx and UPS dumped packages on the Postal Service when they reached their limit.

"At Christmastime, you could barely move in the facility," said Scott Adams, local president of the American Postal Workers Union in Portland, Maine. "Aisles were blocked with mail."

Jay Geller said it took 30 days for a birthday card mailed after Christmas from his mother-in-law in Iowa to reach her 8-year-old grandson at his home in Cleveland. And don't get him started on the homemade scones from Minnesota, which were late and inedible.

"By the time they arrived, they were hard as rocks and smushed flat," he said. Terri Hayes experienced "Christmas in January" when many of her packages arrived late in Medina, Ohio. The last gift to arrive was a necklace and charm sent by a friend in Maryland on Dec. 5. It arrived on Jan. 28.

She sympathizes with overworked postal workers but also worries about more important items, like bills, being delayed.

"I just wish that they would put things back to the way they were when it worked," Hayes said. "Put the sorting machines back. Let them work the overtime hours."

The Postal Service contends it has now returned to "pre-peak" conditions, and DeJoy and six members of the board said they've learned from the election and the record holiday season in which more than 1.1 billion packages were delivered. The postmaster general and board are working on a 10-year plan that will include improvements.

"We must confidently plan for our future — which we believe is bright for the Postal Service and for America," they said in a statement. □

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Senate Republicans back Trump as impeachment trial nears

By HOPE YEN

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump's defenders in the Senate on Sunday rallied around the former president before his impeachment trial, dismissing it as a waste of time and arguing that the former president's fiery speech before the U.S. Capitol insurrection does not make him responsible for the violence of Jan. 6.

"If being held accountable means being impeached by the House and being convicted by the Senate, the answer to that is no," said Republican Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi, making clear his belief that Trump should and will be acquitted. Asked if Congress could consider other punishment, such as censure, Wicker said the Democratic-led House had that option earlier but rejected it in favor of impeaching him.

"That ship has sailed," he said.

The Senate is set to launch the impeachment trial Tuesday to consider the charge that Trump's fighting words to protesters at a Capitol rally as well as weeks of falsehoods about a stolen and rigged presidential election provoked a mob to storm the Capitol. Five people as a result of the melee, including a police officer.

Many senators including Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell immediately denounced the vio-



Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., arrives for a Republican policy luncheon on Capitol Hill in Washington, Tuesday, Jan. 26, 2021.

lence and pointed a finger of blame at Trump. Following the riot, Wicker said Americans "will not stand for this kind of attack on the rule of law" and without naming names, said "we must prosecute" those who undermine democracy.

But with Trump now gone from the presidency, Republicans have shown little political appetite to take further action, such as an impeachment conviction that could lead to barring him from running for future office. Those partisan divisions appear to be hardening ahead of Trump's trial, a sign of his continuing grip on the GOP.

On Sunday, Wicker described Trump's impeach-

ment trial as a "meaningless messaging partisan exercise." When asked if Trump's conduct should be more deserving of impeachment than President Bill Clinton's, whom Wicker voted to impeach, he said: "I'm not conceding that the President Trump incited an insurrection." Clinton's impeachment, in 1998, was sparked by his false denial in a deposition of a sexual relationship with a White House intern.

Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky dismissed Trump's trial as a farce with "zero chance of conviction," describing Trump's words to protesters to "fight like hell" as Congress was voting to ratify Joe Biden's

presidential victory as "figurative" speech.

"If we're going to criminalize speech, and somehow impeach everybody who says, 'Go fight to hear your voices heard,' I mean really we ought to impeach Chuck Schumer then," Paul said, referring to the now Democratic Senate majority leader and his criticisms of Justices Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh. "He went to the Supreme Court, stood in front of the Supreme Court and said specifically, 'Hey Gorsuch, Hey Kavanaugh, you've unleashed a whirlwind. And you're going to pay the price.'"

Paul noted that Chief Justice John Roberts had de-

clined to preside over this week's impeachment proceeding because Trump was no longer president. Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy will preside over the trial as Senate president pro tempore.

"It is a farce, it is unconstitutional. But more than anything it's unwise, and going to divide the country," Paul said.

Last month, Paul forced a vote to set aside the trial as unconstitutional because Trump is no longer in office, which legal experts say is disputable. But the vote suggested the near impossibility in reaching a conviction in a Senate where Democrats hold 50 seats but a two-thirds vote — or 67 senators — would be needed to convict Trump. Forty-four Republican senators sided with Paul and voted to oppose holding an impeachment trial at all. Five Republican senators joined with Democrats to reject Paul's motion: Mitt Romney of Utah, Ben Sasse of Nebraska, Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania.

Some Republicans have said the vote doesn't "bind" them into voting a particular way on conviction, with Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy on Louisiana saying Sunday he would listen carefully to the evidence. But even Trump's sharper GOP critics on Sunday acknowledged the widely expected outcome. □

Jesse Jackson released for therapy post gallbladder surgery

Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — The Rev. Jesse Jackson has been released to a Chicago physical therapy center following gallbladder surgery and medical observation, a spokesman said Sunday. The 79-year-old civil rights leader experienced "abdominal discomfort" on Jan. 29 and was admitted to Northwestern Memorial Hospital where he underwent an undisclosed surgery, according to a late Saturday statement from Jackson's Rainbow PUSH

Coalition. Jackson's longtime spokesman Frank Watkins confirmed Sunday it was gallbladder surgery. Jackson has since been released to a rehabilitation center for a "short period of exercise and therapy," because of his Parkinson's disease, according to the Rainbow PUSH Coalition. Jackson has been seeking outpatient care for more than five years for Parkinson's, a chronic neurological disorder that causes movement difficulties.

"Rev. Jackson is continuing

his civil rights and organizational work and is in high spirits," the organization's statement said. "He's expected to be home with his family shortly."

A protégé of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jackson was key in guiding the modern civil rights movement on numerous issues, including voting rights. Jackson has remained active, most recently advocating for COVID-19 vaccines for Black people, who lag behind white people in the United States' vaccination drive. □



In this Friday, Jan. 8, 2021 file photo, Rev. Jesse Jackson speaks before receiving the Pfizer's BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine at the Roseland Community Hospital in Chicago.

Associated Press

Chicago mayor touts deal with union to reopen schools

By SOPHIA TAREEN

Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot touted a preliminary agreement with the teachers union over COVID-19 safety protocols on Sunday, potentially averting a strike in the nation's third-largest school district.

Some students could return to classrooms as soon as Thursday, with the reopening of school phased-in by grade. Also, the city agreed to vaccinate 1,500 teachers and staff weekly at vaccination sites dedicated to Chicago Public Schools. The possible deal — which still requires approval from the Chicago Teachers Union — also includes metrics that would trigger school closings when cases spike.

The union and district have been fighting for months over a plan to gradually reopen the roughly 340,000-student district, with talks breaking down in recent days on issues including vaccinations. Lightfoot and CPS officials had threatened to lock educators out of teaching systems multiple times, which the union said would lead to a strike for the second time in less than two years. By Sunday, the first-term mayor who had been visibly agitated at recent news conferences, was smiling. "This agreement was about



In this Monday, Jan. 11, 2021 file photo, Elementary 1 teacher Melissa Vozar sits outside of Suder Elementary in Chicago to teach a virtual class Monday, Jan. 11, 2021.

Associated Press

making sure everyone in our school communities just aren't safe, but also that they feel safe," Lightfoot said, calling the last 11 months a "whirlwind for the entire city."

While she called it a "tentative agreement," the union characterized it as an offer that required further review.

"We do not yet have an agreement with Chicago Public Schools," CTU tweeted on Sunday. "We will continue with our democratic process of rank-and-file review throughout the day before any agreement is reached."

It was unclear when the union would begin voting. The union's house of delegates would have to decide whether to send the proposal to the roughly 25,000 members for approval.

A union spokeswoman declined to comment further. CPS officials have said opening schools is safe and that remote learning isn't working for all students, including many Black and Latino students who make up the majority of the district. Union officials had argued that the district's plan, which included air filters in classrooms and

voluntary COVID-19 tests for teachers, didn't go far enough.

Under the proposal, teachers and students in pre-K and special education would return in the first wave starting Thursday. Students in K-5 would return March 1, and students in grades 6-8 would return March 8. No date was given for high school students, who would continue remote learning until further notice.

Illinois rolled out its latest vaccination phase last month that includes teachers, though supplies have been limited.

Schools CEO Janice Jack-

son said Sunday that 2,000 teachers and staff returning to work sooner and living "in medically vulnerable households" would get first dibs on vaccinations starting this week.

After that, the city would begin vaccinating teachers at dedicated city sites, which is on top of a Chicago program prioritizing those who live or work in neighborhoods with the high infection rates.

The agreement also outlined metrics for temporarily suspending classroom learning districtwide — which includes seven consecutive days of test positivity rates — and for individual schools, according to CPS' outline of the deal Sunday. The district said it would continue to grant permission for some employees to continue remote teaching if they have increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 or serve as primary caregivers for someone with higher risk. Pre-K and special education students briefly returned last month, but then stopped amid the escalating fight with the union, which voted to continue remote teaching and reject the district's plans. Teachers and students in K-8 were supposed to return Feb. 1, for the first time since going fully remote last March. The district had offered K-8 students two days of in-person instruction. □



A snowplow makes clears the slippery wooden pedestrian walkway on the Brooklyn Bridge during the second snowstorm to hit the New York area and the Northeast in less than a week, Sunday, Feb. 7, 2021, in the Brooklyn borough of New York.

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A major snowstorm pushed through the Northeastern United

States on Sunday, less than a week after a storm dumped more than 2 feet

2nd major snowstorm in a week blankets Northeast

on parts of the region. By early afternoon, 5 to 7 inches had already fallen in parts of northwestern New Jersey and southwestern Connecticut. New York's Central Park reported about 3 inches. The highest total was recorded in West Whiteland Township, west of Philadelphia, where about 9 inches had fallen. The National Weather Service predicted up to 8 inches of snow in New York City and 2 to 4 inches in Washington, D.C. Up to a foot was projected to fall on some areas along the

Connecticut coastline.

Large, fluffy flakes began falling in Rhode Island late Sunday morning, prompting local governments to enact street parking bans and warn of poor travel conditions for the rest of the day. A heavy band of snow heading northeast had dumped 5 inches in the towns of Sharon and Uxbridge, southeast of Boston, by 2 p.m.

In Connecticut, a jackknifed tractor-trailer caused two exits to be closed on Interstate 84 in Middlebury, with only one lane of traffic

getting by.

Weather service forecaster Bob Oravec said a mix of snow and rain would move northward up the East Coast. "It is a fast-moving storm," Oravec said. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said Sunday's snowfall, which started at around 9 a.m. in the city, would not close COVID-19 vaccination sites.

The massive snowstorm that hit the region on Feb. 1 forced the postponement of hundreds of vaccination appointments in New York and elsewhere. □

Asylum-seekers stuck in Cyprus' cramped camp want out

By MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS
Associated Press

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Emmanuel Conteh negotiates the muddy, rutted pathways in shorts and torn plastic flip-flops and says he can't sleep in his heavy canvas tent at night because of the cold. He laments the "hellish" conditions in ethnically divided Cyprus' cramped Pournara migrant reception camp, where he's been living for the past two months after flying to the breakaway Turkish Cypriot north and then clandestinely crossing into the internationally recognized south.

He says he fled his native Sierra Leone because he was persecuted for refusing to follow in his father's footsteps and practice a kind of witchcraft.

"The head of this society,



Migrants stand behind a fence inside a refugee camp in Kokkinotrimithia outside of capital Nicosia, Cyprus, Friday, Feb. 5, 2021.

Associated Press

they want to train me, but I refused," said Conteh. He wants Cypriot authori-

ties to swiftly process his asylum application and let him and others out of the razor-wire-encircled former military camp near the industrial western fringes of the capital Nicosia that he says feels like prison. "We're not prisoners. We're asylum-seekers. Let them finish our process and then

(free) us," Conteh said. "That's all we're asking." The small eastern Mediterranean island republic is trying to cope with a huge backlog of asylum applications and despite government efforts to expedite the process, migrants say they feel literally left out in the cold.

Designed to accommodate 1,000 people at the most, Pournara is a "first instance" camp where in theory asylum-seekers are initially processed and released after three days. But it now houses 1,500 people, some of whom have been there for months.

Interior Minister Nicos Nouris said this week that Cyprus remains first among all other European Union member states in asylum applications relative to its population.

Last year, the country of around 1.1 million racked up 7,000 asylum applications — most of them from Syrians. Nouris said the government is doing its best to speed up the application process to let in those who qualify and to send back migrants whose application is turned down.

Like Conteh, most asylum-seekers enter the island from the Turkish Cypriot north and cross a porous, United Nations-controlled buffer zone into the south. Many hope to transfer to another EU country on the continent. □



In this picture released by the official website of the office of the Iranian supreme leader, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei speaks during a meeting with army's air force and air defense staff in Tehran, Iran, Sunday, Feb. 7, 2021.

Associated Press

Iran: U.S. must lift sanctions before it lives up to nuke deal

By AMIR VAHDAT
Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's supreme leader on Sunday urged the United States to lift all sanctions if it wants Iran to live up to commitments under its nuclear deal with world powers, state TV reported, but President Joe Biden says the U.S. won't be making the first move. "If (the U.S.) wants Iran to return to its commitments, it must lift all sanctions in practice, then we will do verification ... then

we will return to our commitments," state TV quoted Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as saying, in his first comments on the matter since Biden took office. Biden rejected the idea in a "CBS Evening News" interview taped Friday and airing Sunday. He was asked if the US will lift sanctions first in order to get Iran back to the bargaining table. "No," Biden replied. He was then asked if Iran has to stop enriching uranium first. Biden nodded. □



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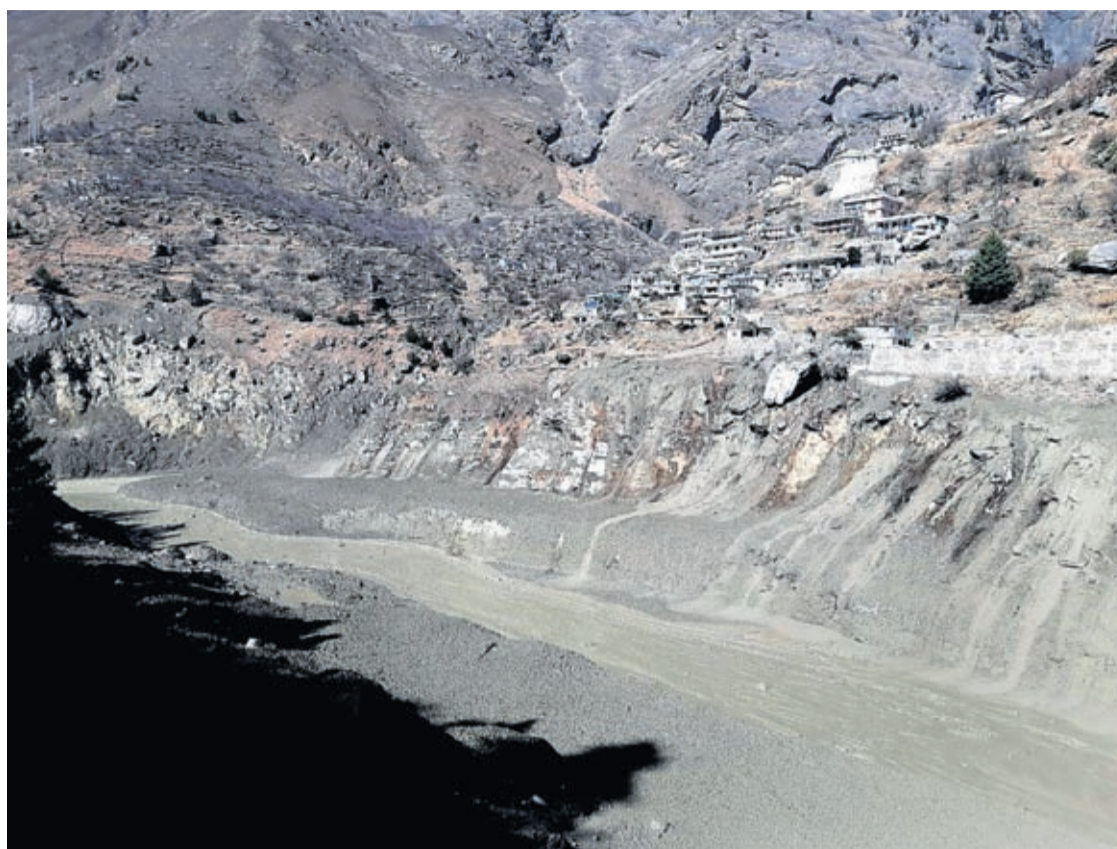
140 are missing after glacier breaks in India's Himalayas

By **BISWAJEET BANERJEE**
and **RISHABH R. JAIN**
Associated Press

RISHIKESH, India (AP) — Indian rescue crews struggled to reach trapped victims Sunday after part of a glacier in the Himalayas broke off and released a torrent of water and debris that slammed into two hydroelectric plants. At least nine people were killed and 140 were missing in a disaster experts said appeared to point to global warming.

Video from India's northern state of Uttarakhand showed the muddy, concrete-gray floodwaters tumbling through a valley and surging into a dam, breaking it into pieces with little resistance before roaring on downstream. The flood turned the countryside into what looked like an ash-colored moonscape. More than 2,000 members of the military, paramilitary groups and police took part in the search-and-rescue operation, including soldiers expert in mountaineering, working into the night under bright halogen lights, authorities said.

The flood was caused when a portion of Nanda Devi glacier snapped off in the morning, releasing water trapped behind it, authorities said. It rushed down the mountain and into other bodies of water, forcing the evacuation of many



Mud and slash are seen in the Dhauliganga River after a portion of Nanda Devi glacier broke off in Tapovan area of the northern state of Uttarakhand, Sunday, Feb. 7, 2021.

Associated Press

villages along the banks of the Alaknanda and Dhauliganga rivers.

A hydroelectric plant on the Alaknanda was destroyed, and a plant under construction on the Dhauliganga was damaged, said Vivek Pandey, a spokesman for the paramilitary Indo Tibetan Border Police. Flowing out of the Himalayan mountains, the two rivers meet before merging with the Ganges River.

Pandey said at least 42 workers were trapped in two tunnels at the Dhauliganga project. Twelve

were rescued from one of the tunnels, while at least 30 others remained stranded inside the other, he said. "The rescuers used ropes and shovels to reach the mouth of the tunnel. They dug through the debris and entered the tunnel. They are yet to come in touch with the stranded people," said Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat, Uttarakhand's top elected official.

An additional 140 workers at the two plants were missing, Pandey said. Surjeet

Singh, a police official, said at least nine bodies were recovered.

The Himalayan area has a chain of hydropower projects on several rivers and their tributaries. Rawat said authorities were able to save other power units downstream because of timely action taken to release water by opening gates. The floodwaters also damaged houses, said Ravi Bejaria, a government spokesman, though he had no details on the number and whether any of the res-

idents were injured, missing or dead.

"It all started sometime around 10 in the morning. We heard a bang, which shook our village," Dinesh Negi, a resident of Raini village, told The Associated Press by phone. He said they watched from high above one of the rivers as the water turned muddy and surged in a torrent.

"We knew something wrong had happened," Negi said. "We could see the fury of the river."

Video showed rescuers in camouflage uniforms and bright yellow or red helmets, using ropes to reach victims. A man who was pulled from a muddy hole threw his arms in the air, and rescuers laughed and exulted with him. Rescue workers comforted victims lying in a row of stretchers in the open.

Scientists have long known that global warming is contributing to the melting and the breakup of the world's glaciers.

Anjal Prakash, research director and adjunct professor at the Indian School of Business who has contributed to U.N.-sponsored research on global warming, said that while data on the cause of the disaster was not yet available, "this looks very much like a climate change event as the glaciers are melting due to global warming." □

Hifter's forces welcome appointment of interim Libyan gov't

By **SAMY MAGDY**
Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Eastern Libyan forces Saturday welcomed the appointment of an interim government to lead the war-torn North African country through to national elections scheduled for later this year, in what could be a key step toward reuniting the country. In a statement, the self-styled Libyan Arab Armed Forces, which are led by Khalifa Hifter, congratulated "the national figures" who were chosen in a U.N.-brokered process.

"The Libyan people hope that it will work tirelessly to

provide services and prepare the country for general elections on Dec. 24, 2021," the statement said, referring to the interim government, which includes a prime minister and three-seat Presidential Council.

The statement was the first made by Hifter's followers since the defeat of his ally, Aguila Saleh, the speaker of Libya's eastern parliament who ran to head the Presidential Council.

Hifter's forces control much of eastern and southern Libya.

After months of talks, the U.N. process — known as the Libyan Political Dia-

logue Forum which includes 75 delegates from across the country — appointed Mohammad Younes Menfi, a Libyan diplomat from the country's east, as chairman of the Presidential Council, and Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibah, a powerful businessman from the western city of Misrata, as prime minister.

Libya descended into chaos following the 2011 uprising that ousted and killed longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi. The country has been divided since 2015 between two governments, one in the east and one in the west, with each



In this Jan. 17, 2020 file photo, Libyan Gen. Khalifa Hifter joins a meeting with the Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias in Athens.

Associated Press

backed by an array of militias and foreign governments.

Dbeibah, the appointed

prime minister, should form a Cabinet and present its program within three weeks. □

Haiti's president alleges coup conspiracy; 20 arrested

By EVENS SANON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)

—Haitian President Jovenel Moïse announced Sunday that police have arrested more than 20 people he accused of trying to kill him and overthrow his government, including a Supreme Court judge who has the support of opposition leaders demanding that Moïse step down.

Moïse spoke at Haiti's airport in Port-au-Prince, flanked by the country's prime minister and the police chief as he prepared to leave for the southern coastal town of Jacmel for the opening ceremony of its yearly carnival, which is being held amid the pandemic. "There was an attempt on my life," he said.

Moïse said the alleged plot began on Nov. 20 but did not provide further details or any evidence except to say among the people arrested is a judge and an inspector general with the police. Moïse then said other high-ranking officials would provide more information but they all walked away and did not speak further to reporters.

André Michel, one of Haiti's top opposition leaders, held a press conference hours after the arrests and called for civil disobedience and demanded that



Protesters set up a barricade on a street during a nationwide strike demanding the resignation of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Tuesday, Feb. 2, 2021.

Associated Press

Moïse be arrested. Michel, an attorney, said it was illegal to arrest Supreme Court Judge Yvickel Dabrézil because he has automatic immunity.

Dabrézil is one of three judges that the opposition favors as a potential transitional president.

Reynold Georges, an attorney who once worked as a consultant for Moïse's administration but has since joined the opposition, denounced the arrests in an interview with radio station Zenith FM.

"We ask for his release im-

mediately," he said of Dabrézil, adding that the court system should shut down until he's free.

Georges also called on people to rise up against Moïse.

Also arrested was Police General Inspector Antoinette Gauthier, according to a statement from the Young Bar Association of Port-au-Prince, which accused Moïse's administration of sowing terror and said Sunday's actions should not be tolerated.

The arrests come on the day that opposition lead-

ers claim Moïse should resign, saying that his term ends on Sunday. Moïse has repeatedly stated that his five-year term ends in February 2022. Former President Michel Martelly's term ended in 2016, but a chaotic election forced the appointment of a provisional president for one year until Moïse was sworn in in 2017. The president of Haiti's Senate, Joseph Lambert, said he would speak about Moïse's presidential mandate on Sunday, at the same time the president is scheduled to deliver a

public address.

The opposition has organized recent protests demanding that Moïse step down, and normally congested streets in Haiti's capital and elsewhere remained empty on Sunday except for some 100 protesters who gathered in Port-au-Prince and clashed with police. Historians noted that exactly 35 years ago, former dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier and his wife fled Haiti with help from the U.S. government amid a popular uprising. Duvalier died in 2014.

Meanwhile, Moïse appears to have the support of the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden. Ned Price, a U.S. State Department spokesman, said Friday that the U.S. has urged Haiti to organize free and fair elections so that Parliament can resume operations, adding that a new elected president should succeed Moïse when his terms ends in February 2022.

Moïse is currently ruling by decree after dissolving a majority of Parliament in January 2020 after no legislative elections were held. He is planning an upcoming constitutional referendum in April that critics say could award him more power, while general elections are scheduled for later this year. □

With Carnival scrapped, Rio's Sambadrome hosts vaccinations

By MARCELO SILVA DE SOUSA and LUCAS DUMPHREYS

Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) —

In a normal year, Rio de Janeiro's Sambadrome would be preparing for its great moment of the year: the world's most famous Carnival parade.

But a week before what should be the start of Carnival, the pandemic has replaced pageantry, with the great celebration put on hold until next year as Rio struggles to quash a rise in COVID-19 cases.

The Rio mayor's office opened a drive-thru immunization station Saturday at the Sambadrome, where

a line of cars queued up on a broad avenue built for floats.

"This is usually a place of pleasure. Today it is too, because we are exercising an act of citizenship and we are opening the Sambadrome to vaccinate," said Paulo Roberto Machado, a 68-year-old nurse who teaches at the Veiga de Almeida University.

Machado has taken part in 40 years of Carnival parades here, but on Saturday he was coordinating 20 volunteer nursing and medical students vaccinating people over 90 years old.

"The vaccine represents the hope of better days,

of returning to normality, to what we did before," Machado said.

Rio's city government officially suspended Carnival and warns it will have no tolerance for those who try to celebrate with open street parades or clandestine parties, saying it is monitoring social media to detect any.

Paes, who often participates in the parade at the Sambadrome, asked citizens not to be "idiots" by ignoring the rules and buying tickets to parties that will not be allowed. "It's a cat-and-mouse game looking to punish those who want party", the mayor said.



Healthcare workers wait for the arrival of elderly people to be vaccinated at a drive-thru vaccination center at the Sambadrome in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Saturday, Feb. 6, 2021.

Associated Press

The cancellation has created a deep economic hole for many businesses that depend on the crowds.

Rio's hotel occupancy rate normally reaches

about 80% in the hot summer months and 100% during Carnival. It's now at roughly 50-60%, according to Alfredo Lopes, the president of Rio's Hospitality Workers Union. □



ORANJESTAD — One thing is for certain: Chef Scott Scheuerman and his team are famous for getting people hooked, just like the fish on your plate. You will get the taste of home fused with Caribbean while dining in elegance. Scheuerman will tell how Aqua Grill established its name since opening in 2002, and why it reaped accolades from such prestigious travel publications as Fodor's, who says, "This hip restaurant is heaven on earth for seafood lovers, who will find fresh fish galore..."

'A Scheuer thing'

American-born Scheuerman, executive chef of Aqua Grill, is thrilled about 'his restaurant'. "We started out as a New England style seafood restaurant, patterned after Boston style. But we quickly blended into some Caribbean, local flair... if you will. We do still offer the traditional New England dishes like whole Maine lobster, northern seafood plates like the salmon, tuna and swordfish. We buy also from the local fisherman to offer Caribbean dishes like snapper and grouper which are number one sellers in our restaurant being the most prevalent local fishes. Catches like wahoo, mahi mahi and brasil are welcome too, anything that comes out of the water we embrace."

Aqua Grill restaurant: The taste of New England with Caribbean flair

Fresh import from Boston

Aqua Grill flies in their own shipments on a weekly basis mostly from Boston because the price quality balance is the best, says the chef. "We are unique in this. Number one priority is buying fresh, we mean not frozen. Our original concept is New England seafood and we stick to that concept. They have a wonderful assortment of oysters and lobsters as well." Aqua Grill also offers international fusion type of menu items; actually all you wish for is there. A very balanced menu awaits you. "And we have options for meat lovers and vegetarians/vegans too. We, however, do not mix it up too much because we believe we do not want to lose our identity as a seafood restaurant," Scheuerman adds.

Rave reviews

Secretly, we all know that the success of a restaurant begins in the kitchen. That is where the chef creates his magic and for Aqua Grill the culinary team has won an assortment of awards for their continuous delivery of 'haute-cuisine del mar.' Classic seafood is mingled with contemporary ideas resulting in surprising dishes that soon made the restaurant a must-dine, confirmed by



established travel media specialists like Fodor's and Frommer's. The glow of Aqua Grill is obvious by entering the restaurant. The eclectic of a modern and a traditional New England fish house style appeal and the open-view kitchen adds to the thrill.

Let's see what is on the menu. Alaska King Crab Legs, Seared Chilean Sea Bass _a super seller, Steamed Live Maine Lobster or Broiled and Stuffed, Snapper and Grouper are part of the delicious seafood selections. All Covid-19 protocol is in place and you may choose to dine indoors or outdoors on the classy patio. Welcome to the theatre of the sea, let us entertain you.

A bit more about Scott

He knows what they like, the tourists from New England (and the rest of U.S. visitors) because he is one of them, yet he has been living for 18 years in the Caribbean making him an expert of both worlds. A native of Delaware, graduate of Johnson & Wales culinary college in Rhode Island, Chef Scott had amassed over thirty years of regional cooking experience in hotels and restaurants as he chartered his course through New England, New Mexico, Florida and the Caribbean before making Aruba his home. Along with formal studies, his diversity as a chef is also due to his interest and university degree in Art and Cultural Anthropology, as well as his wife's native cooking. She is from Colombia.

It's clear as water; for sublime seafood in Aruba go to the island's premier seafood restaurant: Aqua Grill. This seafood-heaven place is already a statement for years with a consistency in upscale dining and top-shelf service. If you like to savor your seafood, this is your dive in. We promise you will get hooked.□

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The Netherlands and the Caribbean countries of the Kingdom present a joint protocol for strengthening border control

ORANJESTAD — The Netherlands has drawn up a joint protocol for strengthening border control together with Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten. In this protocol, it has been agreed that, in any case, additional investments will be made in border control for the next 7 years.

At the end of 2020, Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten individually agreed a political agreement with the Netherlands, in which, in addition to multi-year financial support, reforms are also required (included in the recently adopted implementation agendas). Part of this is the measure to strengthen border control. Agreements have also been made about cooperation between the local and Dutch border services.

The Netherlands will structurally make an amount of up to € 30.5 million available for support by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, Dutch Customs and the Caribbean Coast

Guard in strengthening border control in the Caribbean countries of the Kingdom. With these resources, the Coast Guard will be able to be deployed 24/7. In addition to structural resources, the Netherlands also makes incidental resources available for investments in materials, personnel and facilities of the border services.

The purpose of the protocol is to combat cross-border / transnationally organized (undermining) crime in the Kingdom. The local and Dutch border services will jointly draw up an action plan for each country. Subsequently, these plans of action will be evaluated, renewed and re-established every 3 years. The measures resulting from the action plan are important for a properly functioning rule of law, which is a precondition for economic development, contributes to sustainable public finances and monitors the regularity of expenditure.



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For today we received some amazing pictures from **Glenn and Joann Murphy** from Basking Ridge, New Jersey. They say:

"Aruba is to me... peace, calm and serenity. We have returned this week to our "one happy island." For over 20 years this has been our happy place, our home away from home where we step away from the pressures, stresses and fast-paced life that is pervasive in New Jersey. This past year while our world has been turned upside down by the pandemic those stresses have multiplied with new anxieties and worries. Aruba is the place where we come to breathe, just breathe and find peace in her calm waters, powder sand beaches, and spectacular sunsets. Thank you Aruba! Thank you God for this magnificent jewel!"



Papillon Restaurant presents: Chef's Garden, the butterfly effect of magnificent local food

Sometimes combining the best of the best is a matter of all things falling into place. Every Wednesday from 7pm to 10pm you are welcomed to enter a world where food is a passion. Papillon Restaurant presents their guest chef, Vanbrabant - who will be on the island for a limited time period - and with The Secret Garden menu being a fresh concept on the island, we're sure you will fall completely in love with this.

A bit about Griet

Vanbrabant is a passionate chef with over 15 years of experience in fine dining menu development, culinary staff management, food preparation and creative recipe design. She is educated in classic French Cuisine and Modern Gastronomy teachings throughout her international career in Michelin star and the World's 50 Best restaurants such as El Bulli



and Comerc 24 in Barcelona, Pujol in Mexico City, Rockpool in Australia. Let her entice you with her succulent, Aruban recipes like they've never tasted before.

The menu is carefully done with partly local products, fresh and perfectly matched with a selection of wines by local sommeliers. Diet options are available; please inform them when you make your reservation.

The Secret Garden & Papillon

This is an in-home dining experience where you will feel you are part of an exclusive setting. Private culinary events are the owner's specialty and their lush, tropical garden is also inviting for you to relax and indulge in hours of authentic culinarian delights, a heaven to foodies. For more than a decade, Papillon restaurant has built a reputation with the fusion of classic French cuisine, Dutch and Caribbean flavors. They know how to thrill and in collaboration with The Secret Garden we can only expect phenomenal.

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For more information:

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PALM BEACH —A true once-in-a-lifetime experience is coming up. The stage: an Aruban cunucu house creating a magical ambiance. The play: The Secret Garden; a 6-course culinary voyage by a Michelin-trained chef from Belgium, Griet Vanbrabant. The content: the freshest and high quality products, partly from local farmers, tuned into the most amazing dishes; leaving you in an enchanted state and giving you a memory that will last a lifetime. Be sure to reserve this opportunity before others do. This production is presented to you by Papillon Restaurant.



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Tax forms help reveal extent of unemployment fraud in U.S.

By ADAM BEAM

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) —

Unemployment agencies across the U.S. became lucrative targets for criminals when they were bombarded with claims last year as millions lost jobs due to coronavirus shutdowns.

Now, simple tax forms being sent to people who never collected unemployment benefits are revealing that their identity was likely stolen months ago and used to claim bogus benefits that have totaled billions of dollars nationwide.

Unemployment benefits are taxable, so government agencies send a 1099-G form to people who received them so they can report the income on their tax returns. States are mailing 1099-Gs in huge numbers this year after processing and paying a record number of claims.

In Ohio, Bernie Irwin was shocked two weeks ago when she opened the mail and found a 1099-G form saying her husband had claimed \$17,292 in unemployment benefits last year. The only problem: Jim Irwin, 83, hadn't worked in 13 years.

Bernie Irwin, 86, said her daughter-in-law and a friend also received the tax forms. So did Republican Gov. Mike DeWine, his wife, Fran, and Republican Lt. Gov. Jon Husted, even though none of them had claimed unemployment benefits.

Nearly 26 million people requested unemployment aid in the initial months after states began ordering shutdowns. The unprecedented surge strained unemployment offices that are governed by federal rules but administered in patchwork fashion by state governments, with many relying on 1960s-era software to process applications and issue payments. The federal government, as part of its \$2 trillion relief package approved in March, significantly expanded jobless aid, making it a richer target for fraud. By November, the U.S. Department of Labor's



In this Dec. 18, 2020, file photo, a person passes the office of the California Employment Development Department in Sacramento, Calif.

Office of Inspector General estimated states had paid as much as \$36 billion in improper benefits, with a significant portion of that blamed on fraud.

In California alone, officials say the fraud totaled at least \$11 billion, with \$810 million paid in the names of ineligible prisoners.

Now, overwhelmed unemployment agencies could face another onslaught — this time from people requesting corrected tax forms. A report from the California state auditor last week warned about the problem, and this week the state's Republican congressional delegation and state GOP Senate caucus both sent letters to Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom's administration raising concerns about the impact on taxpayers.

"It does open a can of worms," said Rob Seltzer, a certified public accountant in Los Angeles and a member of the California Society of CPAs. "It really depends upon how fast the (state) is able to send out a corrected form."

Ohio has set up a telephone hotline and created a website allowing residents to report identity theft. Once the state

confirms fraud has been committed, taxpayers will receive a corrected 1099-G form. In the past two weeks, 62,000 people had filed a report, according to spokesman Thomas Betti.

"It's really easy for somebody to be like, 'This isn't my problem. They sent me the form, I've never been to Ohio.' Still, you need to take care of this," Betti said. "Every unemployment system in the country is dealing with this massive amount of fraud." Last month, the IRS said it is likely that many victims won't be able to get a corrected tax form in time to file their federal taxes. In those instances, the IRS says taxpayers should ignore the 1099-G and file their taxes without reporting the fraudulent income. Christina Elliott, owner of BEM Financial Services, worries that process could delay tax refunds for people who are counting on them to make it through the pandemic. She has two clients — one in California and one in Georgia — who say they received incorrect forms showing they received as much as \$27,000 in unemployment benefits last year.

"They are literally going to have to investigate each

one," Elliott said about the IRS. "These people already had their identity stolen that they didn't know about, here lies another problem where they will be waiting months just to get their (tax refunds) that are owed to them."

The problem could be most acute in California, where officials mailed close to 8 million tax forms last month — more than five times the number they send in a normal year. The state Employment Development Department said it has updated its website and hired an additional 300 agents for its call center, training them on how to handle questions about the 1099-G forms.

Rooting out fraud and identity theft has been a struggle for the agency. A state audit released last week showed that from April to October, it responded to less than 2% of fraud reports. By November, it had a backlog of more than 77,000 such reports.

That likely included a report by Greg Musson, who owns a business near Fresno. State officials contacted his company in September to let him know one of his employees had filed for unemployment benefits in March. Musson was sur-

prised to learn that person was him. He put a freeze on his credit and filed a fraud report with the state unemployment department but so far hasn't heard anything back.

"To know that somebody has my information and has been able to get really pretty personal with it, it's like your home being broken into," he said.

Carol Williams, chief deputy director of operations for the California Employment Development Department, said people who get incorrect tax forms should fill out a worksheet on the department website, adding that the website has been "busy."

Some lawmakers worry the agency might not be able to handle the workload. Republican state Sen. Scott Wilk said one of his constituents was "dumbfounded" to get a notice that he owed taxes on \$11,000 in unemployment benefits.

"In a time when we really need people to have confidence in their government, going through this pandemic and rolling out the vaccine, the last thing we need to do is additionally shatter their confidence in our ability to be competent," Wilk said. □

Associated Press

Next stop Mars: 3 spacecraft arriving in quick succession

By **MARCIA DUNN**
AP Aerospace Writer
CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP)

— After hurtling hundreds of millions of miles through space since last summer, three robotic explorers are ready to hit the brakes at Mars.

The stakes — and anxiety — are sky high.

The United Arab Emirates' orbiter reaches Mars on Tuesday, followed less than 24 hours later by China's orbiter-rover combo. NASA's rover, the cosmic caboose, will arrive on the scene a week later, on Feb. 18, to collect rocks for return to Earth — a key step in determining whether life ever existed at Mars.

Both the UAE and China are newcomers at Mars, where more than half of Earth's emissaries have failed. China's first Mars mission, a joint effort with Russia in 2011, never made it past Earth's orbit.

"We are quite excited as engineers and scientists, at the same time quite stressed and happy, worried, scared," said Omran Sharaf, project manager for the UAE.

All three spacecraft rocketed away within days of one another last July, during an Earth-to-Mars launch window that occurs only every two years. That's why their arrivals are also close together.

Called Amal, or Hope in Arabic, the Gulf nation's spacecraft is seeking an especially high orbit — 13,500 by 27,000 miles high (22,000 kilometers by 44,000 kilometers) — all the better to monitor the Martian weather.

China's duo — called Tianwen-1, or "Quest for Heavenly Truth" — will remain paired in orbit until May, when the rover separates to descend to the dusty, ruddy surface. If all goes well, it will be only the second country to land successfully on the red planet. The U.S. rover Perseverance, by contrast, will dive in straight away for a harrowing sky-crane touchdown similar to the Curiosity rover's grand Martian entrance in 2012. The odds



This June 1, 2020 illustration provided by Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre depicts the United Arab Emirates' Hope Mars probe.

Associated Press

are in NASA's favor: It's nailed eight of its nine attempted Mars landings.

Despite their differences — the 1-ton Perseverance is larger and more elaborate than the Tianwen-1 rover — both will prowl for signs of ancient microscopic life.

Perseverance's \$3 billion mission is the first leg in a U.S.-European effort to bring Mars samples to Earth in the next decade.

"To say we're pumped about it, well that would be a huge understatement," said Lori Glaze, NASA's planetary science director. Perseverance is aiming for an ancient river delta that seems a logical spot for once harboring life. This landing zone in Jezero Crater is so treacherous that NASA nixed it for Curiosity, but so tantalizing that scientists are keen to get hold of its rocks.

"When the scientists take a look at a site like Jezero Crater, they see the promise, right?" said Al Chen, who's in charge of the entry, descent and landing team at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California. "When I look at Jezero, I see danger. There's danger everywhere."

Steep cliffs, deep pits and fields of rocks could cripple or doom Perseverance, following its seven-minute at-

mospheric plunge. With an 11 1/2-minute communication lag each way, the rover will be on its own, unable to rely on flight controllers. Amal and Tianwen-1 will also need to operate autonomously while maneuvering into orbit.

Until Perseverance, NASA sought out flat, boring terrain on which to land — "one giant parking lot," Chen said. That's what China's Tianwen-1 rover will be shooting for in Mars' Utopia Planitia. NASA is upping its game thanks to new navigation technology designed to guide the rover to a safe spot. The spacecraft also has a slew of cameras and microphones to capture the sights and sounds of descent and landing, a Martian first.

Faster than previous Mars vehicles but still moving at a glacial pace, the six-wheeled Perseverance will drive across Jezero, collecting core samples of the most enticing rocks and gravel. The rover will set the samples aside for retrieval by a fetch rover launching in 2026.

Under an elaborate plan still being worked out by NASA and the European Space Agency, the geologic treasure would arrive on Earth in the early 2030s. Scientists contend it's

the only way to ascertain whether life flourished on a wet, watery Mars 3 billion to 4 billion years ago.

NASA's science mission chief, Thomas Zurbuchen, considers it "one of the hardest things ever done by humanity and certainly in space science."

The U.S. is still the only country to successfully land on Mars, beginning with the 1976 Vikings. Two spacecraft are still active on the surface: Curiosity and In-Sight.

Smashed Russian and European spacecraft litter the Martian landscape, meanwhile, along with NASA's failed Mars Polar Lander from 1999.

Getting into orbit around Mars is less complicated, but still no easy matter, with about a dozen spacecraft falling short. Mars fly-bys were the rage in the 1960s and most failed; NASA's Mariner 4 was the first to succeed in 1965.

Six spacecraft currently are operating around Mars: three from the U.S., two from Europe and one from India. The UAE hopes to make it seven with its \$200-plus million mission.

The UAE is especially proud that Amal was designed and built by its own citizens, who partnered with the University of Colorado

at Boulder and other U.S. institutions, not simply purchased from abroad. Its arrival at Mars coincides with this year's 50th anniversary of the country's founding.

"Starting off the year with this milestone is something very important for the people" of the UAE, said Sharaf. China, hasn't divulged much in advance. Even the spacecraft's exact arrival time on Wednesday has yet to be announced.

The China Academy of Space Technology's Ye Peijian noted that Tianwen-1 has three objectives: orbiting the planet, landing and releasing the rover. If successful, he said in a statement "it will become the world's first Mars expedition accomplishing all three goals with one probe."

The coronavirus pandemic has complicated each step of each spacecraft's 300 million-mile (480 million-kilometer) journey to Mars. It even kept the European and Russian space agencies' joint Mars mission grounded until the next launch window in 2022.

The flight control rooms will contain fewer people on the big day, with staff spread over a wider area and working from home. Desks have dividers and partitions. Masks and social distancing are mandatory. Perseverance's deputy project manager Matt Wallace, who's working his fifth Mars rover mission, said the pandemic won't dampen the mood come landing day.

"I don't think COVID's going to be able to stop us from jumping up and down, and fist-bumping," he said. "You're going to see a lot of happy people no matter what, once we get this thing on the surface safely." □



Canada blocks cruise ships for a year, ending Alaska trips

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP)

— The Canadian government has extended a ban on cruise ships through February 2022, which is expected to block many ships from visiting Alaska this year.

Transport Canada on Thursday announced the extension of the ban enacted because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Canada blocked cruise ships of more than 100 passengers starting in spring 2020.

The ban was set to expire at the end of February, but Transport Canada said "cruise vessels in Canadian waters pose a risk to our health care systems."

Most large cruise ships visiting Alaska are registered in

foreign countries. U.S. federal law prohibits foreign-registered ships from sailing between two American ports without stopping at a foreign port between. Large cruise ships bound for Alaska either begin voyages in Canada or stop there on the way.

Most of Alaska's 1.3 million visitors two years ago were cruise ship passengers visiting southeast Alaska. Many disembarked for excursions in Anchorage, Denali National Park and Preserve and Fairbanks.

Last year, the pandemic and Canadian restrictions resulted in only 48 cruise ship passengers visiting southeast Alaska, Juneau-based Rain Coast Data re-



In this May 30, 2018, file photo, is the Grand Princess cruise ship in Gastineau Channel in Juneau, Alaska.

Associated Press

ported.

Juneau City Manager Ro-

rie Watt said he was not surprised by the extended ban, although he thought it might last a few months instead of the entire year. □

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

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Difficulty Level ★

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New museum traces history of Black music across genres

By KRISTIN M. HALL
AP Entertainment Writer
NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — A new museum two decades in the making is telling the interconnected story of Black musical genres through the lens of American history.

The National Museum of African American Music, which opened with a virtual ribbon-cutting on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, is seated in the heart of Nashville's musical tourism district, alongside honky-tonks and the famed Ryman Auditorium and blocks from the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

Even as Nashville has long celebrated its role in the history of music, the new museum fills a gap by telling an important and often overlooked story about the roots of American popular music, including gospel, blues, jazz, R&B and hip-hop. "When we think of the history of African American music and the important part it has played in our country, it was long overdue to honor it in this type of way," said gospel great CeCe Winans, who serves as a national chair for the museum.

The idea for the museum came from two Nashville business and civic leaders, Francis Guess and T.B. Boyd, back in 1998, who wanted a museum dedi-



People walk to the entrance of the National Museum of African American Music, Saturday, Jan. 30, 2021, in Nashville, Tenn.

cated to Black arts and culture. And while there are museums around the country that focus on certain aspects of Black music, this museum bills itself as the first of its kind to be all encompassing.

"Most music museums deal with a label, a genre or an artist," said H. Beecher Hicks III, the museum's president and CEO. "So it's one thing to say that I'm a hip hop fan or I'm a blues fan, but why? What was going on in our country and our lived experience and our political environment that made that music so mov-

ing, so inspirational, such the soundtrack for that part of our lives?"

The museum tells a chronological story of Black music starting in the 1600s through present day and framed around major cultural movements including the music and instruments brought by African slaves, the emergence of blues through the Great Migration, the Harlem Renaissance and the civil rights movement.

When Winans recently took a tour of the museum, she saw her own family of gospel singers, The Winans,

represented in the museum's exhibit on spiritual music alongside the artists that influenced her own musical career.

"You never start out doing what you're doing to be a part of history or even be a part of a museum," said the 12-time Grammy-winning singer.

She noted that the museum put gospel music in context with how it inspired social change, especially during the civil rights era.

"When you look at all the different movements that have happened down through the years, and

Martin Luther King Jr., it was always with the church behind them," said Winans. "It was the gospel music that inspired us to love one another, to build bridges." The museum has 1,600 artifacts in their collection, including clothes and a Grammy Award belonging to Ella Fitzgerald, a guitar owned by B.B. King and a trumpet played by Louis Armstrong. To make the best use out of the space, the exhibits are layered with interactive features, including 25 stations that allow visitors to virtually explore the music. Visitors can learn choreographed dance moves with a virtual instructor, sing "Oh Happy Day" with a choir led by gospel legend Bobby Jones and make their own hip-hop beats. Visitors can take home their recordings to share via a personal RFID wristband.

There will be a changing exhibit gallery, with the first topic to be the Fisk Jubilee Singers, an a cappella group originally formed in 1871 to raise money for Fisk University. The group sang slave spirituals at their concerts. The tradition continues today.

After a year of racial reckoning through the movement of Black Lives Matter, Hicks said the timing couldn't be more perfect to highlight the contributions of Black music to our shared American experience.

"(It) is not an accident that we are able to finish and get the museum open in this moment, in this moment where we need to be reminded, perhaps more than others or more than in the recent past that we are brothers and we share more together than we do our differences," said Hicks. □

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1	9	8	5	7	4	2	3	6
7	3	4	6	2	1	5	8	9
5	2	6	9	3	8	1	4	7



Lou Dobbs, with Fox News, speaks at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), on Feb. 24, 2017, in Oxon Hill, Md.

Associated Press

By LYNN ELBER
AP Television Writer
LOS ANGELES (AP) — Fox Business Network's "Lou Dobbs Tonight," whose host has trumpeted unfounded assertions of voter fraud in the 2020 election, has been canceled.

In a statement Friday, Fox News Media said the move was part of routine programming alterations that it had foreshadowed in an announcement last fall.

Fox News Media "regularly considers programming

Fox Business cancels 'Lou Dobbs Tonight' after a decade

changes and plans have been in place to launch new formats as appropriate post-election, including on Fox Business — this is part of those planned changes," the company said.

Whether the cancellation ends Dobbs' career with Fox Business wasn't addressed, and the company had no further comment. The former CNN host started his show at the channel in March 2011, and it became among the most-watched business news channel programs. The statement appeared

to distance the cancellation from a multibillion-dollar defamation lawsuit filed Thursday against Fox and three of its hosts, including Dobbs, by the election technology company Smartmatic. In a previous statement, Fox News said it would "vigorously defend against this meritless lawsuit in court."

The replacement for "Lou Dobbs Tonight" will be announced soon, Fox News said. The show last aired on Friday, with a guest host sitting in for Dobbs, who had no immediate statement. □

On a roll, Medvedev steers Russia to ATP Cup title

By JOHN PYE

AP Sports Writer

MELBOURNE,

Australia

(AP) — After celebrating their ATP Cup triumph as teammates for Russia, Daniil Medvedev and Andrey Rublev will go their own ways at the Australian Open next week and may meet at Melbourne Park as rivals in the quarterfinals.

Medvedev improved his winning streak to 14 matches and secured Russia's 2-0 victory over Italy in the ATP Cup final on Sunday when he beat Matteo Berrettini 6-4, 6-2 at Rod Laver Arena. Rublev had given his team a commanding start with a 6-1, 6-2 win over Fabio Fognini.

The No. 4-ranked Medvedev has certainly been peaking, winning his last 10 matches against top-10 players, including a sweep of the top three at the ATP Finals last year and a close victory over Alexander Zverev in the semifinals here.

"It's a confidence boost," he said.

The Australian Open starts Monday but Medvedev and Rublev, who has won five titles and 45 singles matches since the start of 2020, get a day off before their first-round matches.

As for having such a run of big matches so close to a major, Medvedev said he wouldn't know for a couple of weeks whether it was ideal preparation for a major or not.

"Get the momentum going, sometimes it helps you — I did last year (when) I won two tournaments in a row," he said. "At the same time it's tiring. Played four tough matches, yesterday especially."

The Russians didn't lose a singles match during the group stage or the play-offs this week, and were the second team to win the ATP Cup after Novak Djokovic led Serbia to the inaugural title last year.

The first edition featured 24 countries and was staged in three Australian cities: Brisbane, Perth and Sydney. Because of restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, including

a two-week quarantine for all international arrivals, this year it was cut to 12 teams and played entirely at Melbourne Park. Along with five other tuneup tournaments.

Italy veteran Fognini was in the team that lost to Russia in the group stage last year. In the final, he said it was a bit of a blur.

"We played with the two best shape guys in the circuit at the moment," Fognini said. "Especially in my case, it's tough to say, but I don't have these kind of matches, this kind of speed during the point. At the moment was too much."

It appeared that Rublev and Medvedev hadn't looked too far ahead in the Australian Open draw, until Russia team captain Evge-

ny Donskoy raised the topic of their projected quarterfinal match at the post-match news conference.

"I'm just actually more happy for the guys that they're achieving the level that is going to be out of the limit soon because they're playing unbelievable tennis," Donskoy said. "Yeah, just wishing them to play the same like they played today in the main draw of Australian Open. If the level going to be the same, these guys going to see each other in the quarterfinals."

Medvedev, who is seeded fourth and opens against Vasek Pospisil, said: "Yeah, it's going to be great. You cannot change the draw. If it happens, it's perfect."

Rublev, who is seeded 7th



Russia's ATP Cup winners Daniil Medvedev, Andrey Rublev, Aslan Karatsev and Evgeny Donskoy pose with their trophy after defeating Italy in the final in Melbourne, Australia, Sunday, Feb. 7, 2021.

Associated Press

and opens against Yannick Hanfmann, said "I wish."

"It's too far to say something about it now. We have to go match by match. Daniil

have tough first round. Me, I have as well. We're not going to meet in second round, so we need to win couple of matches first." □

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The biggest win: In 2020, NFL found ways to play every game

By **EDDIE PELLIS**
AP National Writer

More than the youth of Patrick Mahomes or the agelessness of Tom Brady, the most compelling story surrounding this year's Super Bowl was that it was happening at all.

It took nearly 1 million COVID-19 tests, thousands of Zoom meetings, a dozen or so rescheduled games and an untold amount of flexibility for the NFL to not miss a single of its 269 regular-season and postseason games in the midst of a worldwide pandemic. Game No. 269, the Super Bowl, is set to be a fascinating matchup of young (Mahomes) vs. old (Brady) — the Kansas City Chiefs against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

It's to be played Sunday in a one-third-full and socially distanced stadium and with millions of fingers crossed around the country. The NFL and society, in general, are hoping America's biggest sports celebration won't turn into the mother of superspreader events, either at the stadium or at the inevitable thousands of high-fiving, chip-dipping, hug-it-out Super Bowl parties planned across the land. With the reality that the most important results of the Super Bowl — the spike, or lack of spike, in COVID-19 numbers — wouldn't be known until well after the final score was posted and most of the \$4.3 billion in expected wagers are settled, the NFL still scored points by merely making it to the finish line without any major disruptions. "The fact that every team played the correct number of games, and that most people did not get sick, is a real testament to their perseverance in making it happen," said Dennis Deninger, who teaches



NFL football commissioner Roger Goodell speaks at a press conference ahead of Super Bowl 55, Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021, in Tampa, Fla.

Associated Press

a Super Bowl and Society class for Syracuse's sports management department. The resiliency of the players and the league stood out as a bright note this winter, as the coronavirus ravaged the United States and the world. The NFL's ability to keep the show moving — albeit imperfectly — reinforced the sport's strong footing in American culture. It also generated debate about whether the country and the league have their priorities straight, given that resources devoted to playing football could have conceivably been expended elsewhere.

"In some ways, you say, it doesn't feel right to be talking about sports and thinking about sports in the middle of a pandemic," said Ketra Armstrong, the director at University of Michigan's Center for Race and Ethnicity in Sport. "But when you think the role sports can play for the psyche of the country, and you understand the level people are going to to

deliver sports, you can appreciate" the effort the NFL made to make the season happen.

And, in fact, the NFL's efforts benefitted more than simply the league's own interests. Using as a backbone of its research the approximately 957,000 tests it conducted on more than 7,500 players and employees, the NFL collaborated with the Centers for Disease Control to publish a paper describing testing protocols, mitigation strategies and contact-tracing measures that could also be useful in "high-density environments" such as schools and long-term care facilities. A key conclusion from the paper was that "although the protocols implemented by the NFL were resource-intensive" — i.e., the league had plenty of money and manpower to implement a testing program few other organizations would dream of — many of the lessons learned were valuable.

"The idea was to test frequently, to identify when

you had a positive, and to isolate and trace closely if you did," commissioner Roger Goodell said, while taking a victory lap of sorts earlier in the week at his annual Super Bowl news conference. "We don't think there was a safer place to be than at an NFL facility that year. We never doubted that for a second."

The season was far from perfect. Because of rescheduling, there were games played on every day of the week, including Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The Titans, Ravens, Browns and Steelers were among those that endured high-profile outbreaks that threatened not only their rosters but the league's entire operation. In the season's biggest debacle, the Broncos were forced to play a game with a wide receiver playing quarterback after everyone in the QB group got put under quarantine on late notice.

Goodell said all decisions were made in service of pri-

oritizing safety over everything, including the NFL's longstanding calling-card — competitive balance.

And yet, as Goodell pointed out, offense came at a record pace, and 70% of this season's games were decided by eight points or less — reinforcing that, even in a pandemic, anyone can beat anyone on any given Sunday in the NFL.

As the playoffs wore on, some developments started feeling more normal, even if they didn't always reflect well on the league. There was the weeklong wait to see if Mahomes would play in the AFC championship game following his placement in the league's much-debated "concussion protocol" after his head slammed to the turf in the previous week's win. Mahomes returned a week after the scary incident and led the Chiefs to the Super Bowl.

The two biggest off-field news items centered on a high-stakes quarterback carousel, with marquee signal-callers Jared Goff and Matthew Stafford swapping teams (Goff to the Lions and Stafford to the Rams) and Deshaun Watson of the Texans demanding a trade.

More troubling was the annual reminder of the NFL's generally lackluster record in hiring minorities for coaching and front-office positions. It undermined progress made earlier in the season when Goodell, taking the temperature of a country agitated by increasing calls for social justice, conceded that the league should have paid more heed to Colin Kaepernick when he started his own form of protest by kneeling on the sidelines four seasons ago. □